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REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is respectfully requested.

Initially, the Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the indication that claim 21 is allowable.

In the Official Action, the Examiner objects to the drawings as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. § 1.83(a) because the drawings do not show every feature of the invention specified in the claims. Specifically, the Examiner argues that the buffering member must be shown or the features canceled from the claims.

Although the term "buffering member" is not used in the detailed description, those of ordinary skill in the art from a reading of the specification including the Drawings would understand that the same is one or more of the cap 18, the connecting tube 17, the connecting member 16, the main frame 4A of the bending and stretch mechanism portion 4, and the connecting and the fixing member 8, all of which are shown in the Figures. Therefore, those skilled in the art would understand that the buffering member could be one of such features from a reading of the specification including the Figures (particularly from page 26, line 24 to page 27, line 9 of the specification).

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the objections to the Drawings be withdrawn.

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejects claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner argues that the term "connecting member" on line 2 of claim 14 has no antecedent basis in the claim. In response, claim 14 has been canceled, thereby rendering the rejection thereof moot.

Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the rejection of claim 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, be withdrawn.

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejects claims 10-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,982,725 to Hibino et al., (hereinafter "Hibino"). Additionally, the Examiner rejects claims 1, 13, 15-20 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hibino in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,793,622 to Konomura et al., (hereinafter "Konomura"). Furthermore, the Examiner rejects claims 8, 9, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hibino and Konomura further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,609,563 to Suzuki et al., (hereinafter "Suzuki").

With regard to the rejection of claims 10-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), claims 10-12 have been canceled, thereby rendering the rejection thereof moot.

With regard to the rejection of claims 13 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a), claims 13 and 17 have been canceled, thereby rendering the rejection thereof moot.

With regard to the remaining rejected claims, Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) for at least the reasons set forth below. However, independent claims 1 and 18 have been amended to clarify their distinguishing features. Dependent claims 8, 15 and 21-23 have been amended to be consistent with amended base claims 1 and 18. The amendments to the claims are fully supported in the original disclosure. Thus, no new matter has been entered into the disclosure by way of the present amendment.

Specifically, claim 1 has been amended to recite a buffering member to connect a main frame to which is connected the inserting portion and the frame unit, the buffering member absorbing external force applied to the inserting portion. Claim 18 has

been amended to recite a buffering member to connect the main frame and the frame unit, the buffering member absorbing external force applied to the inserting portion. Applicants respectfully submit that neither Hibino nor Konomura discloses the buffering member as recited in claims 1 and 18.

Hibino neither discloses nor suggests that the first unit and the second unit are separate. Rather, Hibino discloses the two units as one body in Fig. 18. Hence, a buffering member as recited in claims 1 and 18 is not disclosed or suggested in Hibino. Furthermore, Hibino does not disclose or suggest any member that can absorb the external force (surplus force). The Examiner argues that Hibino discloses a first unit 663 housing motors 685 and 686 and a second unit 503 housing force-transmitting members 510 and 513. Although the Examiner may be correct, both the motor and force-transmitting member of the endoscope of Hibino is held in the same part. Therefore, Hibino does not disclose or suggest that the first and second units are separate parts.

With regard to Konomura, the Examiner argues that the same discloses an electric endoscope having a buffering member located in a pulley 34 (citing Figure 7a and column 8, lines 39-65). As argued in the previous response, the buffering member (34b) disclosed in Konomura is for preventing a wire from being rubbed and damaged, which is very different from the buffering member as recited in independent claims 1 and 18. Thus, the buffering member disclosed in Konomura is not used for absorbing an external force applied to the inserting portion or the like. Furthermore, as also previously argued, although Konomura may show the motor and force-transmitting part to be in different sections of the operating portion (24), such portions are not separable. Although the C-ring functions to act as a buffer with respect to the wire which is operated by operation of the operating portion, it

is only for protecting the wire with respect to the pulley around which the wire is wound. It is not for connecting the frame which holds the motor and the main frame to which is connected the inserting portion and for absorbing the external force.

Thus, neither Hibino nor Konomura disclose or suggest connecting the main frame to which is connected the inserting portion and the frame unit which holds the motor. Furthermore, neither Hibino nor Konomura disclose or suggest a buffer member to absorb the external force applied to the inserting portion.

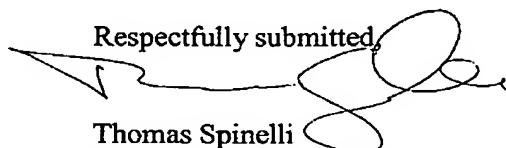
Still further, neither Hibino nor Konomura disclose or suggest connecting the operating portion and the frame unit that holds the motor, and any buffer member that absorbs the force applied to the operating portion when the operating portion is operated.

Independent claims 1 and 18 are not rendered obvious by the cited references because neither the Hibino patent, the Konomura patent nor the Suzuki patent, whether taken alone or in combination, teach or suggest an electric bending endoscope having the features discussed above. Accordingly, claims 1 and 18 patentably distinguish over the prior art and are allowable. Claims 8, 9, 15, 16, 20 and 22-24 being dependent upon claims 1 and 18, are thus allowable therewith (claims 10-13 and 17 being canceled). Consequently, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejections of claims 1, 8, 9, 15, 16, 18, 20 and 22-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a).

In view of the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this application be

allowed and a Notice of Allowance issued. If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference with Applicant's attorneys would be advantageous to the disposition of this case, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,


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